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California to sue feds over levee trees

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The state of California will join environmental groups in a lawsuit against the federal government to protect trees growing on levees.

The state Department of Fish and Game announced Wednesday it will join the federal lawsuit, initiated earlier this year by Sacramento-based Friends of the River.

The suit challenges a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers policy that bans trees on levees, on grounds that trees undermine levee stability and maintenance practices.

"If adhered to, the policy will do incredible damage to California's remaining riparian and adjacent riverine ecosystem, especially in the Central Valley," said Fish and Game Director Charlton Bonham.

The move comes after the state spent several years negotiating with the Army Corps to revise the policy. The lawsuit alleges that the policy violates state and federal environmental laws.

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